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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
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Items 5 (b) and 6 of the
provisional agenda*

PRIORITY THEMES: DEVELOPMENT: WOMEN IN URBAN AREAS: POPULATION, NUTRITION AND HEALTH FACTORS FOR WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING MIGRATION, DRUG CONSUMPTION AND ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Statement submitted by the International Council on Social Welfare and the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I; American Association of Retired Persons, Associated Country Women of the World, Bahá'í International Community, Conference of European Churches (CEC), International Association of Democratic Lawyers, International Council of Jewish Women, International Federation of Social Workers, International Movement for Fraternal Union Among Races and Peoples (UFER), Medical Women's International Association, Socialist International Women (SIW), World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, World Federation of Methodist Women (WFMW), World Vision International and World Young Women's Christian Association, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category II; and International

* E/CN.6/1994/1.

Inner Wheel and Movement against Racism and for Friendship Among Peoples, non-governmental organizations on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 29 and 30 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

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Women's future: the girl child is key

The non-governmental organizations listed above, many of whom are members of the Geneva-based Working Group on the Girl Child, express their concern that although there have been improvements for women and the girl child since the 1985 Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies globally, the girl child still has unequal access to education, nutrition and health and suffers discrimination as a result of other emerging issues.

In many countries, the girl child has a lower status and enjoys fewer of the rights, opportunities and benefits of childhood than the boy child. This inequality becomes increasingly difficult to overcome, and its effects continue into adult life, compounding women's inferior status. With modern technology gender-based discrimination against women begins before birth. This discrimination affects the whole life cycle and is cumulative. A malnourished, uneducated girl child is likely to become a malnourished, uneducated woman, unable to make her needed contribution to sustainable development. Improving the status of the girl child provides a sound investment for the future and is therefore a major factor in the elimination of poverty.

For these reasons it is essential that the status of the girl child together with the root causes of inequality and discrimination are given high priority at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, and that the Platform for Action include strategies to ensure the implementation of the pledges and commitments relating to the girl child, made by Member States in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1990 World Summit for Children, and the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights.

Governments should be urged to take measures and adopt policies:

(a) To eliminate, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and other United Nations bodies, all forms of discrimination against girl children and to ensure equal access to nutrition, health and education, thus equipping them for adult life and employment;

(b) To give support to parents and help reduce the economic, social and political pressures which lead to child prostitution and pornography, traffic in organs, and all other forms of economic and sexual exploitation which currently are affecting millions of girl children.